



Symbolic Meanings of Colors in *The Great Gatsby*

ZHANG Haibing^{[a],*}

^[a]School of Journalism and Communication, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

F. Scott Fitzgerald, who lived in the midst of the “Jazz Age”, was a representative of the “Lost Generation” in the 1920s. He is regarded as the spokesman of the special age in American history. His masterpiece *The Great Gatsby*, written in 1925, is a good illustration of the mood of the “Jazz Age” and is praised highly by many famous writers and critics. The novel applies a lot of symbols, which run through the whole novel and play an important role. And this paper intends to find out major symbols of colors and analyze their symbolic meanings. The major colors in *The Great Gatsby* include green, white, red, yellow, blue and grey. Green is closely associated with the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock. It symbolizes Gatsby’s deep love to Daisy and his American Dream. But as the green light is always feeble and far away, it also indicates the disillusionment of his dream. White, which is closely associated with Daisy, is not only pure but also hollow. It symbolizes vacuity, superficiality, hollowness and ruthlessness. Red is usually related to blood and is closely associated with Tom in the novel. Thus it represents Tom’s character: selfish, arrogant, barbarous, fractious and cruel. Yellow is the most common color appeared in the novel. First, it symbolizes money, materialism and high social position, such as Doctor T. J. Eckleburg’s enormous yellow spectacles and Gatsby’s golden tie. Second, it symbolizes luxury and greed when the author describes Daisy as a golden woman. Third, it also represents destructive power and death, such as the yellow leaves and yellow car. Blue symbolizes melancholy, loneliness, tranquility and fantasy, such as Doctor T. J. Eckleburg’s blue eyes, Gatsby’s blue gardens, blue leaves, blue lawn

and blue livery. Grey symbolizes decadence, bleakness, corruption, disillusionment and spiritual emptiness. The Valley of Ashes explains this color best. Colors used in the novel play an important effect in shaping the characters, developing the plot, and deepening the theme of the novel. It makes this novel more profound and significant.

Key words: F. Scott Fitzgerald; *The Great Gatsby*; Symbolic meaning; Colors

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Background: The Jazz Age

The Jazz Age refers to the feature of the 1920s, which was between the First World War and the Great Depression. It is coined by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Just as Chang Yaixin said in his book *A Survey of American Literature*, “There are at least two important factors that made the decade different from the periods both preceding and following it: the First World War, the sense of life being dislocated and fragmented which was the biggest event that had a profound impact on the period.” (Chang, 2008). It is a crazy and difficult times, and full of wealth, frivolity and carelessness. The young man in that period began to rebel against the traditional culture and morality of previous generations. They had contempt for life and engaged themselves in pursuing money and enjoying the carefree hedonism, for example, driving fast cars, drinking hard whisky, and taking an immense delight in it. This age owns the most expensive carnival and the quite ubiquitous violence. People’s spirit became decadence gradually until its corruption. Fitzgerald characterized the 1920s as the Jazz Age is to imply that the age was as wild and crazy as

jazz. It is also called the Flapper Period and the Roaring Twenties.

It is called the Flapper Period because of the appearance of the uninhibited young women. This age is just after the First World War, which makes an important and profound effect on this period. The United States did not enter the war until 1917, and the battlefield was far away from the United States, which made the states rich in the war and become the economic center of the world. With the great economic boom and industrial development, new technology appeared in people's daily life, which made it possible for women to work in the factory, helped people make money more easily and changed their life styles. It was just these changes and developments that made people believe that they could realize their American Dream through struggling and become anyone they wanted to be. Thanks to the economic boom, people changed their viewpoint towards women and women got more rights and freedom in their work and life. Then they become rebel against the old traditions, for example, they wore short skirts and short hair; they smoke, drunk and danced wildly; and they enjoyed themselves totally without the fetters of traditions.

It is called the Roaring Twenties because of moral decay and the loss of faith, which makes people feel that life is dislocated, chaotic and fragmented. People lived in a spiritual wasteland and felt gloom and despair. The chaos reflected concretely in the lavish parties, cocktail, jazz, wild dance, violence as well as the conflict between the traditional ethic and the modern values. Though people enjoyed themselves in the immense delight, they were also overwhelmed by the sense of doom and failure.

As the spokesman and chronicler of the Jazz Age, F. Scott Fitzgerald explained the characteristics and spirits of this period vividly in his works. Just as in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald describes the Jazz Age with different techniques, such as the description of Gatsby's lavish parties and luxurious life style, the difference between the lower class and the upper class, the embodiment of people's spiritual wasteland and the employment of different symbols.

B. The Author: F. Scott Fitzgerald

F. Scott Fitzgerald is a famous American writer of novels and short stories. His works are the paradigmatic writings of the Jazz Age. He is a member of the "Lost Generation" and is regarded as one of the greatest American writers of the 20th century. He has written five novels: *This Side of Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, *The Great Gatsby* (his most famous), *Tender is the Night*, and *The Love of the Last Tycoon* (unfinished).

F. Scott Fitzgerald was born in 1896 in St. Paul, Minnesota into a middle-class family, and his father was gentlemanly but unsuccessful in business. He got an expensive education in private schools. When he was

15 years old, he entered in Newman School. In 1913, after graduating from the Newman School, he studied in Princeton University, where he founded his interest in literary writing and decided to cultivate his writing techniques industriously. At the university, he met the future famous critics and writers Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop, who gave him a lot of benefit in his writing career and life. He also took part in the Triangle Club, an intellectual club, where he began to write shows for the club. With the efforts he had made in the literary, he developed a reputation in college.

In 1917, he joined the army. Then he met Zelda Sayre in the same way as Gatsby meets Daisy. They fell in love with each other quickly. But as the daughter of a judge, Zelda broke up their engagement because of Fitzgerald's poor financial situation and social position. To win Zelda back, Fitzgerald engaged himself in writing and making money. Then in 1920, the successful publish of his first novel *This Side of Paradise* became immensely popular and helped him gain both fame and wealth and marry with Zelda. In order to support their luxury life style, Fitzgerald wrote a lot of short novels for the Saturday Evening Post, but he regarded those works as vulgar rubbish. In 1920s, he acquainted himself with Ernest Hemingway, who exerted a great influence on his writing career. In 1925, he published his third novel *The Great Gatsby*, which was regarded as his masterpiece but was not popular until he died.

However, his life was full of grief since Zelda got schizophrenia in 1930. In order to pay his wife's expensive medical fee and their daughter's expensive tuition, he had to write harder to earn more money. This tragic time broke him down and the loneliness and alcohol overwhelmed him. Then in 1940, Fitzgerald died for heart disease with his last novel *The Last Tycoon* unfinished.

Chang Yaixin also said in his book *A Survey of American Literature* that, "As much as he enjoyed the 'roaring' of the postwar boom years, he foresaw its doom and failure." (Chang, 2008, pp.154-219) Thus Fitzgerald's works reveal a sense of grief and fear.

C. The Novel: *The Great Gatsby*

The Great Gatsby, published in 1925, is regarded as Fitzgerald's masterpiece and one of the finest American novels in the 20th century with its capture of the mood and characteristics of the Jazz Age. T. S. Eliot read this novel three times and commented that it was "the first step that American fiction has taken since Henry James." The story of the novel is inspired by Fitzgerald's personal experience. And the main theme of the novel, the American Dream, is not only the individual's American Dream, but also reflects the mood and the moral situation of the age. As one of the great stylist in American literature, Fitzgerald applied outstanding symbolism throughout the whole novel to develop the plot, to shape the personality of characters and to deepen the theme

vividly, and it makes the novel more profound and significant.

As to the story of the novel, it adopts the first person and is developed by what Nick sees, hears and thinks. Nick is a reliable narrator because he follows his father's advice to reserve all judgments. It mainly tells about Gatsby's disillusionment of his American Dream. Gatsby is a poor young man who falls in love with Daisy, a wealthy girl, but she is too expensive for him. Then Daisy breaks their engagement and is married to Tom Buchanan, a rich young man who was born from an enormously wealthy family with a high social status. Then Gatsby regards Daisy as his American Dream and is determined to win her back. In his point of view, only when he owns enormous money can he win his love back. So in order to earn enough money, he engages himself in bootlegging and other illegal activities. With enough money, he buys a magnificent villa in West Egg where he can see Daisy's villa in the East Egg and holds lavish parties to lure Daisy. Then with the help of Nick, Gatsby meets Daisy again, but to his disappointment, he finds the present Daisy is not the ideal love of his dreams, which makes him feel a strong sense of loss and disillusionment. After Daisy killing Tom's mistress unintentionally in an accident, she plots with Tom to trap Gatsby to burden the accusation. As a result, Gatsby is shot by the mistress's husband but Daisy escapes with Tom ignoring Gatsby's death.

1. SYMBOLISM

1.1 The Definition

Symbolism is an art movement first emerged in the literary field of the late 19th century French, and then it affects drama, painting, philosophy and other fields. As Wang Shanshan wrote in her essay *Colorful Symbolism in The Great Gatsby*,

According to the Oxford dictionary symbolism means the practice of representing things by means of symbols or of attributing symbolic meanings or significance to objects, events, or relationships. "Symbol is a way of using something integral to the work to reach beyond the work and engage the world of value outside the work. (Wang, 2011)

As an artistic theory, symbolism gets the name from a unique writing technique - symbol. The term "symbol" comes from the Greek word "Symbolon", which refers to a token that showing friendly affection between two people by putting the previous divided board together when they meet again. Now, it has been extended to refer to the sign or item which can express some idea or other things. Symbol is different from metaphor. It contains more profound and deep meaning than metaphor because it reflects the intrinsic nature of reality. And it develops quickly from a simple writing technique into the abstract symbolism through intellectuals' efforts.

Symbolism emphasizes the expression of subjective spirit and personal inner world. It does not adopt the direct description, but chooses the specific images and symbols to imply the subtle and mysterious inner spiritual world and let the reader re-create the emotions and ideas by using the unexplained symbols. Finding the corresponding relationship between the outer things and the inner world through images makes symbolism own the mysterious character. Symbolism reflects a thought tendency in that age that seeking inspiration and enlightenment from the mysterious spiritual world but avoiding facing the reality.

1.2 The Development

French poet Charles Baudelaire and American poet Allan Poe are the forerunners of symbolism. *The Flowers of Evils* written by Baudelaire in 1857 is the groundbreaking work of symbolism and has made a significant influence on the world literature. Then with the appearance of Baudelaire's important followers, such as Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé, symbolism becomes flourishing at the end of the 19th century.

Symbolism can be divided into two periods: pre-symbolism and post-symbolism.

Pre-symbolism refers to a French poetry genre emerged in the second half of the 19th century. The representatives include Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Verlaine and Rimbaud. The basic concepts they have put forward form the framework of the whole symbolism theory. They found and explain how to use the intuitive method to experience the world and how to use the hint of image and the dreamlike symbol to recognize the world rather than use the simple imitation and metaphor to reflect the world. Thus they raise a strong ideological trend of the symbolism poetry, which captures the public's attention and makes symbolism get permeation and development. With time goes on, many symbolism poets choose other new literary development direction, but the influence of symbolism has rooted in France as a trend of thought in literature and art. Then in the late 19th century, symbolism began to expand to Western Europe and North America beyond the border of France. And in the 1920s, post-symbolism grew up.

Post-symbolism refers to a world literary trend which appears after the First World War, comes to a climax in 1920s and draws to a close in the 1940s. This writing technique is employed in the latter all kinds of writing. As to its main characteristics, it creates the morbid beauty, reflects the most real inner world, creates images in the illusion, employs symbols to imply something and uses musicality to increase the effect of meditation.

1.3 The Influence

Symbolism affects many fields, such as poem, drama, painting, philosophy and film.

The symbolism is to use visible symbols to represent the invisible things, which aim to show the invisible

mind and ideas hidden in the visible things. Through the symbolism in a work, readers can get an insight into the writer's inner world and broader implications.

As the symbolism is flourishing in the 1920s, F. Scott Fitzgerald is affected greatly and we can see that from his famous work *The Great Gatsby*, which is regarded as his most mature work whether on the thought or on the writing techniques. The employment of symbolism makes his work go beyond the narrow individual world and associate subjectivity with objectivity which has endowed it with representativeness. Fitzgerald experiences the life changed from a poor young man to a famous literary writer and enjoys himself in the luxurious and enjoyable life style, so he can vividly depict Gatsby's mysterious and charismatic fortune and show the intoxicated mood of the Jazz Age. Nevertheless, what makes Fitzgerald great is not "the writer's voice" in the work, but his classic intelligence to integrate personal consciousness with the outer world and to integrate personal emotion with the social environment. In his understand and explanation of the age, he sees the illusion and superficiality of Gatsby's dream as well as the failure of the American Dream.

Among the symbols Fitzgerald employed in the novel *The Great Gatsby*, colors have made a deep impression on readers because they run through the whole novel and contain a deep layer meaning wherever they occur. There are six main colors appearing frequently in the novel: green, white, red, yellow, blue and grey. They make the novel more vivid, more colorful, more dreamlike, more visionary and more profound.

2. SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF COLORS

2.1 Green

No matter in the Oriental culture or in the Western culture, green is the color of spring, which symbolizes confidence, vitality and hope. In *The Great Gatsby*, the green color runs throughout the whole novel, and it is closely related to Gatsby's short life. So it symbolizes Gatsby's original dream and hope, his ceaseless pursuit of his dream and even the corruption of his dream and life.

The green color is closely associated with the green light occurred in the novel, which is closely related to Gatsby and the whole theme. The green light burning all night occurs three times in the novel.

The first time when the green light occurs is at the end of the first chapter. Nick saw that Gatsby was stretching out his arms toward the dark water and was trembling. "Involuntarily I glanced seaward - and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock." (Fitzgerald, 2013, p.169). Actually, the green light is just at the end of Daisy's dock. In Gatsby's eyes, the green light just represents Daisy, who is his lifelong pursuit and dream. He thinks that the reason why Daisy breaks up their

engagement and is married to rich Tom is that he is too poor. So he believes that he can win Daisy back only if he earns enough money. Then he is full of hope at that time and the green light is his hope and dream. Though the light is minute and far away, he believes that only if he tries his best to pursue it, he can touch the green light, hold his hope and realize his dream. But on the other hand, as the light is always minute and far away, it symbolizes that Gatsby's dream is doomed to fail.

The second time when the green light occurs is in the fifth chapter. At this time, Gatsby has successfully shown his enormous fortune to Daisy and Daisy begins to cry stormily when she faces Gatsby's incredible wealth. And Gatsby said to Daisy that "You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock." (Ibid., p.226) It seems that he is nearly realizing his dream, but he becomes lost in a deep reverie because of the big difference between the real Daisy and his imaginary Daisy. So now the green light seems to have lost its original significance and the fascinating charm, which symbolizes the big difference between the dream and reality and indicates that the American Dream is beautiful in the imagination but is fragility in the reality.

The third time when the green light occurs is at the end of the novel. With the death of Gatsby, the people who holds the faith in the light is not existed anymore, which indicates the disillusionment of the American Dream. "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter - tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. And one fine morning" (Ibid., p.296) So, besides the disillusionment of dream, the green light also represents new hope and the ceaseless struggle towards our dream.

The green light appears throughout the whole novel makes the plot more complete and the theme more deep and profound. Gatsby simply integrates his dream with love and wealth, and gambles on Daisy, who is hollow, selfish, greedy and indifferent. And in such a society where is full of materialism, carefree hedonism and moral decadence, Gatsby's pursuit of his dream on the spiritual level is incompatible with the social environment. So Gatsby's American Dream about winning back Daisy is doomed to corrupt in the Jazz Age.

2.2 White

White occurs many times in the novel, and it is closely associated with Daisy.

White represents the immaculate and pure beauty. It symbolizes nobleness and purity. It is Daisy's color in the novel. She wears white dress when she meets Gatsby for the first time as well as when Nick visits her in the East Egg. At the age of eighteen, she dressed in white and had a white car, which made her charming in the eyes of young officers. Her house is full of the color of white, for example, "The windows were ajar and gleaming white

against the fresh grass outside” (Ibid., p.158) and “A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags.” (Ibid., p.246) Even her name Daisy is also a kind of white flower. Thus it may easily make people feel that she is pure, flawless, innocent and noble when people meet her the first time. That is why Gatsby is infatuated with her throughout his life and regards her as a pure beauty and as his American Dream.

However, white actually symbolizes empty, vacuity, superficiality, ruthlessness and selfish to a great extent in the novel. Describing Daisy with the color of white, it indicates that under the pure and beautiful appearance, Daisy owns a superficial, hollow, cold and selfish heart inside. Her life is full of nothing except luxury and she wastes everyday in boringness and loneliness, for example, Daisy once cried, “what’ll we do with ourselves this afternoon, and the day after that, and the next thirty years?” (Ibid., p.168) Thus she represents the hollow and superficial upper class in the Jazz Age. What is more, although Gatsby has run out of all his youth and passion for her, even sacrifice his life, Daisy shows no grief for his death but just goes out for traveling with her husband, which reveals her selfish and indifferent personality. Thus she represents the spirit and mood of the Jazz Age and the hypocritical values and moral standards of the bourgeois.

White implies that although the upper class is rich in their material life, they are quite poor and decadent in their morality, and are irresponsible and insensitive to the society, to their life and to other people. White symbolizes Daisy’s emptiness, superficial, hypocrisy and ignorance. Whereas Gatsby regards Daisy as his dream, so it indicates that his dream is illusive and worthless, and it also implies that his American Dream is doomed to be corrupted.

2.3 Red

Red is associated with blood, so it is the symbol of violence, danger and rage. Nick has bought a dozen books on finance, which is red and gold standing on his shelf. The gold color of these books represents money. While the gold is associated with red here, it means that the worship and obtain of money is closely associated with blood and violence in that age. On the other hand, when Nick left Daisy’s house, he saw “in front of wayside garages, where new red gas-pumps sat out in pools of light.” (Ibid., p.170) In this sentence, the author not only uses the color “red”, but also uses the word “pool”, which indicates the ending of the story. Here red represents the blood of Myrtle who died in front of a gas station in the Valley of Ashes and the blood of Gatsby who was shot in his swimming pool.

Xu Dawen said in his essay *Dream & Illusion—Symbolism in The Great Gatsby* that, “Red and white were fundamental tone of color in Daisy and Tom’s villa. Since white symbolized personality characteristics of Daisy, red can show Tom’s individual character: selfish, arrogant, barbarous, and cruel.” (Xu, 2013)

It is Tom’s enormous wealthy and superior family background that makes him selfish, arrogant, defiant and supercilious. And he always brutally swept anyone standing in front of him aside. He is disloyal to his marriage. Though he has married with Daisy, he often trusts with his mistress, Mrs. Wilson. However, after discovering his wife and Gatsby’s love affairs, he is so selfish and arrogant that he unexpectedly takes his wife to Gatsby only to prove that Gatsby cannot cause any harm to him, from which we can see his arrogance and defiance. After knowing Daisy kills his mistress unintentionally by Gatsby’s car, out of envy, he instigates his mistress’s husband to kill Gatsby, from which we can see his selfishness and cruelty.

2.4 Yellow

Throughout the novel, it can be seen that the most common color accompanying with Gatsby is yellow. With this color, the author skillfully implies what kind of outer self that Gatsby intends to show before others.

Yellow is the color of gold, which symbolizes money, materialism and high social position. In Western culture, the yellow color is the color that the aristocratic class uses to decorate themselves, so it represents wealth and noble identity as well as the gaiety and communication. Then in order to win Daisy back, Gatsby chooses the yellow color to decorate himself and his house to show that he has been one member of the rich folk. As Gatsby naively thinks that Daisy has never loved anyone else any more except him, he engages himself in earning enormous wealth to win his losing love back. After owning enough money, he keeps himself in a golden world to show his wealth to Daisy: His golden tie, yellow car, golden toilet set and even his golden food and music in his lavish parties. What is more, Doctor T. J. Eckleburg’s enormous spectacles are yellow too. So all these yellow and golden things indicate that the Jazz Age is an age where everyone shows great worship of money and where the materialism is so fashionable that even God cannot avoid its influence.

What is more, the author describes Daisy as a golden girl. So yellow also symbolizes luxuriousness, greed and coward. When Gatsby shows a pile of shirts before her, Daisy cries stormily with her head bent into the shirts. Even her voice is full of the sound of gold coin. All of these show that what Daisy loves only is just money and wealth and that she enjoys herself greedily in the wealthy and luxurious life style. Regarding such a golden woman as his dream, Gatsby is doomed to be disillusioned.

On the other hand, the yellow color is the color of autumn leaves, which symbolizes decay, death and destructive power. Before Gatsby was shot by Wilson, it was depicted that he refused the chauffeur’s help and disappeared among the yellowing trees in a moment, which indicated his death. And his yellow car not only ends Mrs. Wilson’s life, but also eventually leads to his death. But it is Daisy who actually leads to Gatsby’s

tragedy. So this color also indicates the failure of the American Dream.

Yellow, the color that Gatsby is struggling all his life, not only gives him confidence, but also destroys his dream and life. So it reflects the characteristics of the times and the fate of the people at that time.

2.5 Blue

Blue represents tranquility, melancholy, loneliness and fantasy. If the yellow color is the color to show Gatsby's outer self, the blue color, which is full of sadness and fantasy, indicates Gatsby's real inner self - lonely, sorrowful and fanciful.

In the novel, Gatsby's garden is described as blue, such as the blue garden and blue livery occurred in the third chapter, "the blue leaves" occurred in the eighth chapter and the "blue lawn" occurred in the ninth chapter. The blue tone of Gatsby's garden reveals Gatsby's loneliness and melancholy in his inner heart. He holds lavish parties in his blue garden to allure Daisy, but fails, which makes him become more sad, lonely and melancholy. Though holding the luxurious parties, he never takes part in them. That is why the people who take part in the parties hold speculation and debate on the real identity of Gatsby and there are few people knowing or seeing the host of the free parties. As to the reason why Gatsby does not take part in his parties, it may be that the real Gatsby cannot merge himself with those wealthy people and the tranquility in his inner heart is contrary to the noise scenes.

Blue also symbolizes the fantasy and illusion of dream. When the blue color is used to describe Gatsby, it indicates that Gatsby is full of beautiful fantasy and illusion towards his dream, Daisy. He believes firmly that Daisy loves him sincerely in the depth of her heart all the time and he will own Daisy one day in the future with his enormous wealth and true love. In the end of the novel, when Nick sees the blue smoke of leaves in the air, he realizes that the disillusionment of the American Dream is inevitable in such a roaring age. Then he decides to come back home where own the traditional morality.

2.6 Grey

Grey is the basic color tone that rules the whole novel. It symbolizes decadence, bleakness, corruption and disillusionment and represents moral decay, spiritual emptiness and death.

The valley of ashes is a grey place where everything is colored grey.

This is a valley of ashes - a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. (Fitzgerald, 2013, p.279)

There are also grey cars crawling along an invisible track and ash-grey men swarming up with leaden spades.

Just as Eliot's "wasteland", the valley is a spiritual ruin of young man in the Jazz Age. Every grey thing in the Valley of Ashes makes people feel depressed, hopeless and afflicted. Besides the poor Valley of Ashes is grey, there are many scenes is colored grey in the novel, for example, the living room of Tom's mistress is filled with grey smoke; the guests in Gatsby's parties have grey names; the accident which kills Mrs. Wilson happens in the dusk. All these grey scenes symbolize spiritual emptiness, moral decadence, gloomy life and sad tragedy.

After Mrs. Wilson's death, "Wilson's glazed eyes turned out to the ashheaps, where small grey clouds took on fantastic shape." (Ibid.) This indicates Mr. Wilson's painful state of mind and his determination to kill the owner of the yellow car. Living in the world of money worship, people's spirit is empty and moral is decay, and as if they are living in a lifeless desert where they are putting up a last-ditch struggle for their life, hopelessly.

In the end of the story, the author describes that Gatsby is killed by an ashen and fantastic figure. The appearance of this grey figure just indicates Gatsby's disillusionment and death. It also means that all the things including Gatsby's dream and life are ended in the bleak and gloomy tragic grey atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

The Great Gatsby is Fitzgerald's masterpiece and one of the finest American novels in the 20th century because it has captured the mood and characteristics of the Jazz Age. The symbolism is employed throughout the whole novel plays an important role in developing the plot, shaping characters and deepening the theme.

Among different symbols Fitzgerald employed in this novel, colors make a deep impression on readers because they run through the whole novel and contain a deep layer meaning wherever they appear. There are six main colors in the novel: green, white, red, yellow, blue and grey.

Green is closely associated with the green light at the end of Daisy's dock, which is minute and far away. So it symbolizes Gatsby's original dream and hope, his ceaseless pursuit of dream and even the corruption of his dream and life. White is Daisy's color, which not only presents pure beauty, but also symbolizes the empty, vacuity, superficiality, ruthlessness and selfish in the inner heart of the upper class. Red is a color closely related to blood, so it represents violence, danger and rage. As white and red are the basic color of Daisy and Tom's house, red is Tom's color and symbolizes his personality: arrogant, fractious, selfish, barbarous and cruel. Yellow is the most common color accompanying with Gatsby, and it is usually associated with money and autumn leaves, so it symbolizes money, materialism as well as decay, death and destructive power. Contrary to the yellow color, blue represents tranquility, melancholy, loneliness and

fantasy, which are the inner characters of Gatsby. As the basic color tone which rules the whole novel, the lifeless grey color symbolizes decadence, bleakness, corruption, disillusionment and even death.

Although the green light only occurs three times in the novel, it runs throughout the whole novel. So the green color makes the plot of the novel more complete and rigorous. The color of yellow, blue, white and red indicate the personality of Gatsby, Daisy and Tom. Grey builds the basic background tone of the whole novel, which indicates the disillusionment of the American Dream and helps us understand the main theme of the novel more easily and vividly. And all of these colors have deepened the themes of the novel: the disillusionment of the American Dream, the moral decay and hollow of the upper class and the feature of the Jazz Age.

In a word, the employment of symbolism makes this novel go beyond the narrow individual world and associate subjectivity with objectivity. So it is the symbolism that endows the novel with representativeness and far-reaching important significance. And the employment of symbolism is the most important distinguishing feature of the novel and makes it success to

a great extent. Especially the use of different colors makes the novel more vivid, more colorful, more dreamlike, more visionary and more profound.

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